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ABSTRACT

The 1867 British North America Act consigned responsibility for the education of Canadian Indians and Inuit to the Federal Government, but churches ran the schools until the post-World War II period. Government policy from 1948 until 1969 encouraged the integration of Native children into provincial educational systems. In 1969 the Government proposed that all services for Native people be provided through the same agencies serving the majority of citizens. Native people rejected this proposal and in 1972 demanded control of their educational system in order to preserve their cultural identity. The Federal Government accepted the principle of Indian control of Indian education. Canadian acceptance of cultural pluralism is reflected in official support for developmental studies of indigenous languages. Language programs were developed to enable initial literacy in indigenous languages, with English or French becoming the language of instruction by grade 4. Where parents request, the native language may continue to be taught thereafter. Qualified staff shortages are being tackled through various innovative training programs for Native teachers and paraprofessionals. Efforts are underway to encourage the inclusion of Native languages in provincial curricula and to develop instructional materials and strategies by consulting Native parents and organizations. (Author/NQ)

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION
FOR INDIANS AND INUIT

THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The British North America Act of 1867 consigned responsibility for the education of Canadian Indians and Inuit to the Federal Government but schools were run by the churches until the post-World War II period. Government policy from 1948 until 1969 encouraged the integration of native children into Provincial systems of education. In 1969 the Government proposed that all services for native peoples should be provided through the same agencies which serve the majority of citizens. The native peoples rejected this proposal and in 1972 demanded control of their educational system in order to preserve their cultural identity. The principle of Indian Control of Indian Education has been accepted by the Federal Government. Canadian acceptance of cultural pluralism is reflected in official support for developmental studies of indigenous languages. In education, language programs have been developed to enable initial literacy to be established in indigenous languages, with English or French becoming the language of instruction by Grade IV. Where parents request, the native language may continue to be taught thereafter. Problems of shortage of qualified staff are being tackled by means of various innovative training programs for native teachers and para-professionals. Efforts are underway to encourage the inclusion of native languages in Provincial curricula and to develop instructional materials and strategies in consultation with native parents and organizations. Increasingly this role is being assumed by the Federally-supported Native Cultural-Educational Centres. Parental involvement has brought about changes in school programs which better reflect native value systems and aspirations. This policy is considered an essential element in the native people's social and economic advance within Canadian society.

I am delighted to be here and I thank you for this opportunity to share with you our Canadian experiences in the field of bilingual education: the good things that have happened as well as the problems that have surfaced in the few years since bilingual programs have been introduced into federal schools attended by Indian and Inuit children in Canada.

The original unification of some of the geographical units into a nucleus from which modern Canada later grew, resulted from an Act passed by the British Parliament. Although the British North America Act of 1867 consigned responsibility for the Education of Canadian Indians and Inuit to the federal government the latter provided very little education for these groups until the middle of the present century. This vacuum was entered by various denominations of the Christian Church. These missionary educators, to quote one of their apologists, designed programs to "give a plain English education adapted to the working farmer and mechanic". With the passage of the Indian Act in 1876 and the signing of treaties, the federal government provided greater financial assistance, but the running of the schools remained the responsibility of the Churches. Much of the education took place in a residential setting. There was little public awareness of the impact on Indian youth of these forces of acculturation. In 1945, of a total enrolment of over 16,000 Indian children, over half were in residential schools while fewer than 100 were in public schools of the Provinces. In 1948 a National Superintendent of Indian Education was appointed to direct the system but in that same year a special Parliamentary Committee recommended that the education of native children should be integrated with that of the non-native children wherever this was possible. Consequently, by 1969 about 60% of Canadian Indian children were in Provincial schools which received tuition fees on behalf of the native children from the federal government.

In 1969, too, a proposed new government policy on Indian affairs was published. It stated that services for all Canadians should come through the same channels, with special help being directed to groups in most need. Now feeling the threatening winds of assimiliation, the Indian people appraised what had been happening to their children and viewed the results with apprehension. They perceived government actions as being actually and potentially destructive of their cultural integrity and, took political action, hopefully before it was too late, to halt the slide towards

assimiliation. From then on schools were "re-federalized"; independent corporations were formed by Bands to run schools and residences. Eventually this grass roots movement culminated in a position paper entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education" presented to the Government of Canada by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972. The very essence of this paper is the concept that Indian parents must, at the local level, assume responsibility for Indian education and have full control of it. This right of the Indian people has now been officially recognized and at the present time my Department is working co-operatively with the native peoples to translate the idea into fact. Guidelines for this transfer of control are being worked out.

High on the list of the native peoples' priorities is the question of Canada's indigenous languages and the need for recognition of the contribution which the original inhabitants have made to Canadian history and life. The stress placed on language directs our attention compellingly to those factors which led to the current situation. A review of the background does not present an attractive picture. It is true that in some cases the threat of linguistic domination actually strengthened native peoples' attachment to their language and culture, and there were many cases where non-native educators attempted to synthesize their programs with the native cultures. However, for the most part, Indian critics cite instances of active downgrading and outright suppression of native languages, the alienation of children from their parents because of language loss, and similar such affronts as have been the lot of various minority groups throughout the World.

I am optimistic that our dialogue with the native peoples has resulted in new language policies which are leading us in the right direction. We must also see these developments in the context of a society which has accepted multi-culturalism as a national goal. As well, most Provincial governments have passed permissive legislation enabling local communities to include in their school curriculum the arts, customs, music language and history of the local people. Never before has the climate been so promising for the expansion of bilingual-bicultural programs for our native peoples and I believe that at the present time, people working in all sectors of native education are capitalizing on current conditions and social attitudes to forge ahead with these programs.

In Canada today, there are approximately 270,000 registered Indians who belong to ten major linguistic groups and who speak 54 languages or dialects. There are approximately 13,000 Inuit who speak 20 different dialects. These are people for whom the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs has constitutional responsibility under the Indian Act. There is of course an equally large group of persons of native ancestry who are not Registered Indians and for whom educational services are provided by the authorities of the Provinces or Territories in which they reside.

Of the 283,000 "registered" native people, however, approximately 25% or 70,000 are of school age. It is a generally accepted fact that the future for most small language groups does not lie in their mother tongue. These groups must, therefore, have the opportunity to learn the language of the dominant society and one of our aims in education is to make the transition from the native language to either French or English as painless as possible.

We have therefore developed pilot language programs based on the premise that the child's mother tongue should, wherever possible, be the language in which the initial literacy is developed. Once the literacy skills have been established in the child's first language, transfer of the skills to the reading and writing of a second language is less difficult.

The stated aims of our native language programs, therefore, are to:

- encourage the development of the native language and to facilitate the move from a native language to the English or French language.
- develop a positive attitude towards the native language and either or both of the two official languages.
- encourage the development of basic educational skills, concepts and processes, first in the native language and later in English or French.
- develop a sequential program of teaching English or French as a second language.
- stimulate interest in school and a desire for further education.

The specific aims of the kindergarten phases of the project are to:

- develop and increase the child's ability to communicate in his native language.
- enable the child to learn certain basic concepts and processes in his own language.
- foster the initial and informal use of English or French to be followed by the first stages of a planned program in which English or French is taught as a second language.

Two types of language programs are being offered in some schools:

In the first, the mother tongue of the majority of the children entering the school is used as the medium of instruction for all subjects,

In the second, the mother tongue is taught as a subject of instruction from kindergarten through to completion of high school.

When the native language is the medium of instruction, English or French is introduced as a second language, using a language shift pattern to facilitate the change over to the dominant language by the Grade 4 level. So we see a child in the first year of his schooling being taught 90% in Cree or Dogrib or Eskimo and 10% in English; the second year perhaps 80 - 60% in the native language and 20 - 40% in English. The third year the percentages change to 40 - 20% native and 60 - 80% English and finally, in the fourth year, the language of instruction becomes English or French, with the native language continuing to be taught as a subject of instruction.

Regardless of the type of program chosen, the request for native language instruction must come from the Indian or Inuit community. A measure of the rate of expansion of the native language program in Canada is the fact that from a single Mohawk course offered on the Caughnawaga Reserve, near Montreal, during '69 - '70, we now have 174 federal schools and 34 provincial schools offering programs in a total of 23 different native languages. A major consideration in this regard is the question of staffing. The majority of educators involved in the native language programs are classified as Teacher Aides or Native Language Instructors, who very rarely are trained teachers. These people are recruited by the local community on the basis of their knowledge and standard of usage of the vernacular. At the present time we are

exploring ways whereby these employees may be afforded the opportunity to become certificated teachers -- if they so desire. At the same time we must anticipate how these people will fit into diversified staffing plans should they choose to continue as para-professionals. In any case there will continue to be a need for the training and retraining of all teachers of native languages. Since 1972 the federal government has supported a Native Cultural Educational Centre Program. These centres have been created by native groups to foster cultural and educational activities among Indians and Inuit. We are confident that these Indian Cultural Colleges will be playing a greater role in the future, both in teacher education and in native linguistics.

At the present time there is a major effort underway in the Provinces and Territories to increase greatly the number of native Administrators and classroom teachers. While the proportion of native people working in all aspects of native education is 34%, if we look at the number of principals and teachers, we find that only 10% of these are native people. This lack is presently being partially compensated for by the employment of 543 native teacher aides who operate mainly in the early grades. In addition 19 Native Language Instructors are employed. A current striking phenomenon is the latter group's drive for higher status. This militant professionalism is yet another facet of our native people's striving for greater recognition within our society.

A major challenge is the need to co-ordinate, to some degree, the efforts of the various agencies engaged in work with native languages. This is a formidable task when one considers the cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity involved. These agencies include local school curriculum committees, native cultural colleges, universities, native teachers' associations, Provincial Departments of Education, and the Education Branch of my Department. The future role of my Department will of course depend on the rate at which the Indian and Inuit people will assume direction of the Native Language Programs. As presently envisaged we see our future role as being one of making the resources of Government available to attack problems, which have been identified by Indian people, who have suggested Indian solutions.

At the present time, many of our universities offer Canadian native languages as subjects of study. A more sensitive area is the introduction of native languages

as high school options. Where this has already been done the results have usually been gratifying and the courses have truly served as bridges between cultures for the young people involved. At present Indian people serve on 57 Provincial school boards and we assume that, as this number increases, so will the native cultural content of Provincial school curricula. I would be less than candid if I left you with the impression that there is no resistence to such innovation among non-native individuals and groups.

We have found, however, that such backlash phenomena are almost always rooted in a simple lack of communication. Frankly, in the past we have lacked the social mechanisms which would have encouraged native and non-native to develop a deeper appreciation of the other's point of view. Today, however, the renaissance of our indigenous cultures and the efforts of a wide range of government and non-government agencies have served to sensitize the majority population, to a gratifying extent, to the native fact.

Current needs have necessitated the devising of special programs to increase the number of native teachers at a faster rate. These programs have certain important common elements. They stress:

1) standards of student performance equivalent to regular programs;
2) individualized programs to meet the student needs;
3) strongly supportive counselling services;
4) heavy reliance on nurturing professional relationships between the students and their practice teacher-mentors;
5) the minimizing of cultural alienation.

A boldly innovative scheme was launched this summer by the Province of Ontario. In August 96 native student teachers, who had been recommended by native associations, completed a seven-week summer school course and were granted Temporary Elementary School Teacher's Certificates valid for one year. On completion of another summer program in 1975 these people will be fully qualified probationary teachers. Innovative action always invites repercussions. We have been placed in a position

where we must assure parents that these trainees are competent educators. We have also heard from teachers' associations who, in this time of decreasing school populations, must be alert to threats of possible loss of their members' jobs. Although we take these approaches seriously, nevertheless, our thinking is more influenced by the fact that, in most of our remote native communities, teacher recruitment and turn-over problems are endemic. We are of course hopeful that with a rise in the proportion of native teachers in native education we shall see a significant rise in staff retention rates which will be reflected in the greater progress of pupils.

One of our greatest concerns is the evaluation of our bilingual-bicultural programs. As you know, evaluation of curriculum and the curriculum development process is a complex problem, with the experts disagreeing on the validity of the various modes and approaches that we find in the literature. A great deal depends on the character of the project which cannot really be understood outside of its situational context and in many of our projects the situational context is, at times, rather delicate. We have a three-way relationship between Indian bands, the federal government and provincial governments. As federal schools follow provincial curricula, it might appear advisable to request provincial consultants to do the evaluation. However, our bilingual-bicultural development work has as an added major dimension: an endeavour to sensitize the native people to their own potential and capabilities.

Unless those chosen to do the evaluation are sensitive to native aspirations, attitudes and educational problems (socially, politically and economically), as well as to the curriculum development process itself, it may be extremely difficult for them to know even what to look for, let alone judge the merit of what they are observing.

Assuming, however, that we are able to locate people who can conduct the evaluation with sensitivity, knowledge and understanding, the problem of the evaluation itself is still complex. First of all, stated objectives of a development project may need to be articulated into operative educational terms -- and the Indian community must agree with this articulation. Perhaps I should give you an illustration of this.

One of our most successful curriculum development projects in the last few years was

located on the Hobbema Reserve in Alberta. Some of you may have been present at the Annual Conference of this Association in Toronto in 1972 when Dr. Ted Aoki of the University of Alberta recounted the Hobbema Curriculum Story.

When the Hobbema people launched their project, they stated:

"The fundamental objective of the Hobbema Curriculum Project is to create, to develop and to organize instructional materials and instructional strategies appropriate for the education of the children and youth of Hobbema..." They also said that "There is urgent need to involve the parents of the Hobbema School in discussing and determining what they want in their own schools...." and further, "We believe that a clear statement of these wants is essential in determining the content of multi-media instructional material (books, films, filmstrips, slides, video-tapes, etc.) that will be developed. We further believe that the construction of good instructional material... requires constant participation and consultation with parents, teachers and students."

An interesting point to note here is that while the teaching of the Cree language to the students in Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2 and 3 was to be an integral part of the project, at no time did the Hobbema Curriculum Committee identify the development of fluency in the Cree language as one of the objectives of their project.

This fact suggests strongly that the Hobbema people were taking a very broad view of the question of cultural identity. They felt the need to bring about a radical change of emphasis in the school program so that it might better reflect the value system and aspirations of the community. They intended to have an input into the school program which would ensure recognition that the school and the community share a common culture and that they as parents had a valuable and tangible contribution to make to the education of their children. Their decision as regards language also revealed their perception of the role English would play in their children's future. If we use as criteria the degree of people involvement and the quantity of materials produced, then, certainly, the Hobbema Curriculum Project has proved eminently successful.

There are many other programs and projects which are related to our attempts to provide a relevant bilingual-bicultural program for Canada's native students. Our bibliography project -- where annotations on books about Indians are prepared by Indian university students; our pre-employment, vocational, adult education and higher education programs; our band management training programs, to mention just a few. I will be pleased to provide specifics on any or all of these if you are interested.

In summary, we in Canada are witnessing a dramatic expansion of bilingual-bicultural education among the indigenous peoples. In the light of what has already been accomplished we are now able to speak with less discomfort of the days when Canada's native languages were devalued. We recognize the resurgence of these languages as an integral part of the legitimate social aspirations of the groups concerned. Above all we are committed to consult and work with native peoples to ensure that their assumption of jurisdiction over their educational system will lead to their having more effective control of their lives, their communities, their property and their future.

THANK YOU.

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Attachment: Population of Linguistic Groups in Canada by Language or Dialect. December, 1972.

Population of Linguistic Groups in Canada
by Language or Dialect
December 1972

LINGUISTIC GROUP	LANGUAGE OR DIALECT	POPULATION
Algonkian	Abenakis	661
	Algonquin	4,156
	Blackfoot	8,650
	Cree	77,938
	Delaware	894
	Malecite	1,931
	Micmac	10,104
	Montagnais	6,185
	Naskapi	351
	Ojibway	54,834
	Ottawa	1,715
	Potawatomi	898
		168,317
Athapaskan	Beaver	864
	Carrier	4,879
	Chilcotin	1,515
	Chipewyan	5,543
	Dogrib	1,338
	Hare	792
	Kutchin	1,145
	Loucheux	1,305
	Nahani	1,238
	Sarcee	511
	Sekani	507
	Slave	3,608
	Tahltan	748
	Yellowknife	540
		24,533
Haida	Haida	1,450
Iroquoian	Huron	1,142
	Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora	22,099
		23,241
Kootenayan	Kootenayan	449
Salishan	Bella Coola	637
	Comox	868
	Cowichan	6,399
	Lillooet	2,658
	Ntlakyapamuk	2,865
	Okanagan	1,595
	Puntlatch	45
	Seechelt	512
	Semiahmoo	27
	Shuswap	4,097
	Sorgish	1,232
	Squamish	1,300
		22,235
Siouan	Assiniboine	1,184
	Dakota	5,619
		6,803
Tlingit	Tagish	489
Tsimshian	Gitksan	2,731
	Niska	2,562
	Tsimshian	3,041
		8,334
Wakashan	Haisla	888
	Heiltsuk	1,311
	Kwakiutl	2,854
	Nootka	3,691
		8,744
	:	264,595
	General List:	85
	Grand Total:	264,680